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THE CITIES OF JAPAN

By Hon. Harvey N. Shepard

The entrance of Japan into the family of nations, so that membership is confined no longer to people of European civilization, but, regardless of historical origin and religious preferences, embraces every state able to maintain an efficient and stable political organization, gives an added interest to the institutions of the Island Empire. When travelling there we all observe the dress and the manners of its people; admire the grandeur of its mountains and the picturesqueness of its valleys, and the beauty of its temples; and we know something in a general way of the national government; but it is not often we learn how the several communities are administered locally, although this page of their history is by no means lacking in value.

The local governments are of recent development, and are based upon French and Prussian models. It is a curious anomaly that the local governments, the codes of law, and the educational systems of the Japanese are French or Prussian, while in commercial undertakings English practice is the rule. In exchange, in insurance, and especially in shipping, the terms in vogue are English, and they sometimes have no equivalent in German or Japanese law books. A similar discrepancy exists in other departments of social life. While the government and the state are largely under German forms, the people and society work under English and American ideas. The British are perhaps the most respected, but Americans, I think, are rather more congenial. Naturally the people do not love Germans and Russians, as they do not forget that Russia and Germany snatched away the prize of the war with China.

The empire is densely settled. While the United States has a population of 28 persons a square mile, and Europe 101, Japan has 317. Everybody marries, and there is no race suicide.

Agriculture is the leading industry, and 60 per cent of the population find employment in the cultivation of the soil. Therefore one reason for solicitude, the density of the population, which is nearly twice that of China, is that not more than one-sixth of the soil can be cultivated. The mountains are too steep and too sterile; they catch an abundant rainfall, which, however, rushes out untimely, so that nearly all the rivers lie in broad and sandy beds, a mile wide at flood and a few yards in the dry season. As in China, much of the soil has been washed away, and the fields have been strewn with stones.

The tendency to city life, with which we are familiar in the United States and Europe, has shown itself of late also in Japan; and the farmers and other inhabitants of the country districts are moving into the cities and towns. In 1896 only 16 per cent of the population resided in cities and towns of over 10,000 inhabitants; now the number is estimated at 25 per cent, but the exact figures will not be known till 1915.

Up to 1878 the villages, towns, and cities, were mere subdivisions of the forty-three prefectures into which the empire is divided; their officials were appointed and were regarded as government agents. But in that year both they and the prefectures were given elective assemblies. In 1884, however, another law was promulgated that the village heads again should be chosen by the government, on the ground that those elected by the people were not qualified for their duties. This was a severe blow to the local government system, which was still in its infancy. Fortunately, the city, town, and village regulations, published in 1885, to further extend "the old customs of interrelationship between the neighbors," and to protect "the inherent rights of cities, towns, and villages," altered the title of the head man of a town, or of a village, and made him an elected official for a term of four years, subject to the approval of the prefect. The approval by the prefect has come to be a mere form, since a wise prefect, though he is an appointive officer of the central government, does not often put himself in opposition to public opinion. The head man may or may not be

a professional official and may or may not receive a salary, dependent upon the importance of the town or village.

A city government consists of a mayor or shicho, his assistants, one to three in proportion to the population, a council of six to twelve members, and an assembly. The assemblies were authorized in 1884 to nominate three candidates for mayor and report the nominations to the emperor, petitioning him to choose one of them. When these regulations were about to be put into operation, special regulations were established for Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, as exceptionally large and prosperous cities; and so in these three cities the prefect took the place of the mayor. Subsequently in 1898 the administration of these cities was made to conform in the main to that of the other fifty cities. The department of home affairs now invariably selects the nominee who has received the largest vote in the assembly. The assistants and the councilmen are elected by the assembly. The mayor and his assistants, who need not be citizens of the city when they are chosen, hold office for six years, and are paid. One of them convokes the meetings of the council and is its chairman. The councilmen hold office for six years, one-third retiring every two years; and their functions include the preparation of business for the assembly, attendance at its meetings, the execution of the decisions of the assembly, the administration of the city revenue, and the general superintendence of city affairs. In November of last year an imperial ordinance made a change in the duties of the councils of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, which ordinance I have not seen; but I am told by Dr. W. W. McLaren, professor of economics in Keio University, that it deprives the council of its administrative functions and leaves it the mere ghost of its former self, since now it can do nothing except to give advice when consulted by the mayor.

All heads of departments, except the treasurer, who is elected for six years by the assembly, on the nomination of the council, and all clerks are appointed by the council. "The number of such persons shall be determined by the assembly." "The amount of salary to be paid to the shicho, to the assistants, and to other salaried officials as well as to

servants, shall be fixed by decisions of the city assembly." In charge of the departments are committees, elected by the assembly, and composed of councilmen, assemblymen, and citizens at large. "The city assembly shall be competent to examine papers and accounts relating to the city affairs and to demand reports in order to ascertain whether the management of affairs, the execution of the decisions of the assembly, and the collection and the application of the revenue, are properly carried out."

The city assembly is the popular representative body; and varies in number, in proportion to the population, from thirty to sixty. It is empowered to "represent the city, and decide on all subjects relating to the city affairs." The assemblymen hold office for six years, one-third of them retiring every two years, are eligible for reelection, and, like the councilmen, draw no salary, but receive "compensation for the actual expenses needed for the discharge of their duties." All male citizens may vote for the assemblymen, if they are over twenty-five years of age, have resided in the city two years, and have paid one dollar a year in direct national taxes. The voters are divided into three classes, according to the amount of taxes paid to the city, and each class elects one-third of the councilmen. The object of this division, as in the similar Prussian system, is to give the highest taxpayers a power and a representation greater than they could secure by numbers.

"The elections shall be made by ballots on which shall be inscribed the names of those for whom the vote is cast, and, after having been safeguarded in a folded paper, shall be handed to the chairman by the electors themselves; the names of the electors shall not be inscribed."

"When the electors hand in their ballots, they shall orally give their full names and places of residence; and the chairman after having referred such names and places to the lists shall put the ballots unopened into a ballot box. The ballot box may not be opened until the polling is closed."

"No member of a city assembly may bind himself by the direction or request of any of his constituents." It elects from its own members its president and his deputy, one of

whom takes the chair except "when the matter of any question relates personally to him, or to his parents, his brothers, his wife, or his children." In the case of a large city it is permissible to divide it into wards each with its own mayor, assistants, council, and assembly. This provision is copied from Paris where there is a mayor in each ward, and from London where there are assemblies in the several districts. The local government units are not defined sharply. For instance, the Tokyo district, called Tokyo-fu, consists not only of the city and its suburbs, but also of twenty-two towns and one hundred and fifty-six villages contiguous to the city, and of hundreds of small islands, one of which is a thousand miles distant.

The law says: "A city shall be considered a juristic person and shall administer by itself its own affairs;" and it is given by general laws a wide grant of power, to do anything, within its area, which it may think fit, provided that its actions do not conflict with any national law and are not contrary to the public good, and also provided that the consent of the higher authorities be obtained for certain projects. This method of bestowing wide powers upon local authorities is borrowed from continental European countries, and undoubtedly it has many advantages when compared with the Massachusetts habit of bestowing only specific powers. It precludes the necessity of frequent petitions to the legislature, and the waste of a great deal of time and money to obtain for local authorities necessary powers.

The most important function of the assembly is to consider and vote the budget. This must include, among other things, suitable provision for the common school education of all the children for six years between the ages of six and fourteen. The imperial rescript enjoins that "education shall be so diffused that there may not be a village with an ignorant family, nor a family with an ignorant member." The number, therefore, of children in the schools is very large. In Yokohama, for instance, 89 per cent of the children of school age, boys and girls, are enrolled; and in Nagoya 97 per cent. In Osaka there are 42 public kindergartens with

6500 children, about 37 to each nurse. The official figures for the whole empire show that in 1870, 15 per cent of the girls of school age, and 40 per cent of the boys, were in school; but that in 1908, 95 per cent of all the children, boys and girls, were enrolled; and in some towns every child was upon the books.

Wandering about in Shizuoka I came to a boys' school; and it was interesting to see how in its furniture it conforms to our ideas. At home these boys have no chairs, but squat upon the floor. Here they had chairs and desks. The army surgeons have shown that the squatting position of the Japanese is the occasion of the shortness of their legs, which are out of proportion to the remainder of the body. The introduction of chairs and tables is intended, among other things, to alter this defect. Another illustration of thorough care is found in the fact that, before a schoolhouse is built, the site is examined to see if there is adequate space for playgrounds, and if there is a sufficient supply of good water. School books are printed in clear type, with standard spaces between the words and lines, to check the strain upon the eyes. The schools, moreover, have school physicians, to look after the general health and the sanitary conditions in their respective schools, and to make physical examinations of the pupils at fixed intervals.

While Japan is careful of the well being of its children with the one hand, with the other hand it is doing them a lasting injury. On account of their low wages, and also because they are less troublesome to manage than men, there is a big demand for them in the factories. But to attend school, and in addition to work in the factories, especially at night, inevitably lowers the standard of these little workers, and threatens a general deterioration of the nation. It is the children, whose tiny fingers paste match boxes, and put on the labels. A brush manufacturer of Osaka sends brushes to a thousand homes in country districts, in order that the bristles may be fastened into them by childish hands, practically the manipulation and straightening of each bristle in a tooth or hair brush. The most nimble of these industrious

little workers receive only 2 to 4 cents a day. The latest official figures, those of 1910, show over 40,000 children, under fourteen years of age, in factories and shops.

Thousands of young girls contract to live for three years in a compound, like so many peas in a pod and to work in the mills twelve hours a day one week, and twelve hours a night the next, at 10 cents a day, and on Sundays also. Some compounds are very bad. The places where food is served are mere sheds, with leaking roofs and gaping walls, and pools of water accumulate on the earthen floors. The seats are 4-inch bare boards, and the tables two 10-inch boards nailed together. The sleeping quarters are a trifle better, and the floors are covered with matting; but the girls sleep in rows, fifty, or even a hundred, in a room. Another sad feature in Japan is the employment of a million or more of bright and healthy men, capable of receiving an industrial education, in the performance of tasks which are delegated elsewhere to horses and mechanical traction.

A change is at hand. Many owners now make their factories homelike. A cotton mill in Osaka, which employs twelve hundred people, provides a hospital, with professional nurses and a physician in constant attendance. All the employees have one meal of excellent quality, each day, in a large and comfortable dining room. Also there is a large amusement room and lecture hall in which entertainments are given. Schools, libraries, bath rooms, recreation grounds, and flower gardens, are furnished in other factories; and facilities for saving and other methods of mutual help are provided. Some owners entertain their workers with picnics, and theatrical performances. These, however, are the exceptions. The great change will come from the factory act, recently passed by parliament, although it does not become operative for five years, in order that there may be no sudden dislocation of industry. Children under twelve then cannot be employed at all, and children under fifteen, and women, cannot work more than twelve hours.

There are many evidences of growing wealth. The savings bank deposits in Nagoya, for instance, have increased in ten years six fold, and the postoffice savings deposits have

increased twenty-five fold. The revenue of the city in the same period has increased three fold, and the expenditures in the same proportion. There is municipal progress in all portions of the empire. Old cities have taken new life, and new cities have come into existence. Public works of great magnitude, such as waterworks, sewerage systems, harbors, new streets, parks, and public buildings, have been undertaken. Thousands of houses have been destroyed to make straight and graded streets, from 60 to 100 feet in width, with good sidewalks, where formerly sidewalks were unknown. Sanitation and hygiene, including surgical and medical treatment for the poor, have not been neglected; for the Japanese are quite abreast of the times in these things, and in the control of epidemic or contagious diseases. Gas and electric lighting plants have been established, and excellent systems of electric tramways. Many of the streets are lighted at night, the more important with electric lighting. There are several new theaters, which are quite European in appearance, though behind the curtain all generally is still Japanese. But western plays are not infrequent, especially in Tokyo, where recently *Hamlet*, translated into Japanese, was the attraction. It also is significant that, while you cannot find a European who likes Japanese music, hundreds of Japanese enjoy Beethoven and Wagner. There are many excellent newspapers, and several of them are in English, although they are edited by Japanese. Quite a number have a large circulation; but, unfortunately, they are not free from the defects which characterize so many of our own newspapers.

I cannot recall being solicited once by a beggar in any highway or other public place; and, while this probably is not due to the absence of poverty, but in part to an energetic police, and in part to improved public charities, a considerable portion doubtless is due to better social conditions.

Whatever may be urged against the morals of Japanese traders, and of this matter I heard a great deal, not only in Japan, but in every portion of the Far East, though personally I came across nothing in the least suspicious, the administration of local affairs is honest; and the public works have been carried out without a charge of extrava-

gance. One of the commercial complaints against the Japanese is that they make and sell articles under the trade-marks of other nations; travellers have run across such articles in Manchuria which had been made by the Japanese and which bore English printed trade-marks. But German factories are doing this same thing in regard to Japanese goods, and articles made in Germany bear Japanese trade-marks and signs copied with all the care of German ingenuity. Is it the old story of the pot calling the kettle black?

Some of the cities, as does Oakland in California, provide a fund for the entertainment of visitors and for advertising their attractions. Nearly all maintain commercial museums, where you may inspect samples of their products, and where courteous attendants will give you explanations and prices, and tell you where to go to make purchases. At the end of 1910 there were no fewer than seventy commercial museums and exhibitions. By far the most interesting of these commercial museums is in Kyoto, the old capital. The building is well adapted to display the beautiful products of the city; and every effort is made, not only to secure for the benefit of the public fine examples of early Japanese arts and crafts, but also, in order to improve modern manufactures, by comparison with others, the museum collects, and exhibits samples of articles produced in other parts of the world. Moreover, public lectures are given free from time to time under the auspices of the museum. The spirit which has prompted municipal reform and organization has shown itself also in the establishment of chambers of commerce in nearly all the important cities. Tokyo and Osaka started these organizations, and today chambers of commerce are found in sixty principal cities. The members present to the authorities their views concerning the revision of laws and of institutions, reply to questions put to them by the authorities, act as arbitrators in commercial and industrial conditions, publish statistics, and render protection to commerce and industry. Nearly every city publishes a yearly statement, sometimes in English only, rarely in Japanese only, and generally in both languages, giving full information of the municipal enterprises during the year, the revenues and expenses, and school, health and trade statistics.

Nagoya has developed into a modern industrial city with 400,000 inhabitants, most of whom seem busy and prosperous. Its streets have been extended on a spacious scale; and along the center of its main thoroughfare, which is 7 miles long and 78 feet wide, runs a well equipped electric tramway. The shops and workshops are the best built, the largest, and the newest looking in Japan, and they are noted for a wonderful array of signs. Its factories also are well worth visiting. Corporations, combinations, trusts, and department stores, flourish there.

The story of the last five years in Osaka is one of continual progress and activity. Among many achievements worthy of notice are the completion of an extensive system of electric tramways; the extension of the water supply; the inauguration of a sewage system; the development of a net work of suburban electric lines and their connection with the municipal tramways; progress in the construction of a commodious harbor; and the improvements of the numerous bridges, which are a marked feature. Foreign trade has made great strides, and foreign visitors, for business or pleasure, have increased in numbers. Its merchant fleet now displays the flag of the Rising Sun in all parts of the world. The rapid growth in the population, no less than 50,000 a year during the last four years, has caused extensive building operations, the opening of new streets, and the constant introduction of new features in administration, and in civic enterprise. The streets and canals are thronged with people. Now you pass through a long street given over to pottery and porcelain; then through one for umbrellas and fans; and next through others for cotton fabrics, rugs, brushes, leather goods, bronze and metal work, provisions, and clothing. In addition to these enterprises, a good deal is done for secondary education, especially for technical schools and colleges. There also is a first class municipal library; and there are many temples, shrines and Christian churches. Here at least we do not find the "changeless East."

Unfortunately Tokyo, the capital, does not present so bright a picture. Its streets are poorly made, even the important thoroughfares are not paved, the lighting is inadequate, fire protection is furnished by antique appliances, and

the smoke nuisance grows unchecked. Newness and poverty are no sufficient excuse for these bad conditions, for since 1860 the large cities of Europe have demolished their walls, drained their moats, widened their streets, built new avenues, and generally changed their mediaeval aspect by taking on a modern appearance and equipment.

Tokyo in June last took over its tramways, at a purchase price double the cost of construction. Nevertheless Tokyo is not the first city in the world to pay an enormous sum for an unexpired franchise, nor is it the first city to begin to operate its tramways under a cloud of debt. Many British cities have gone through the same experience, and careful management generally has worked wonders in a few years. Manchester began to operate its tramways with the heavy handicap of a large franchise purchase, but in ten years the water was squeezed out and the renewal account on the sinking fund was kept intact. The same may be accomplished in Tokyo. Already the service has been improved, and, through higher wages and shorter hours, better employees have been obtained, who will coöperate with the management, for general experience shows that efficient labor, though the wages are higher, is always the cheapest.

Tokyo and Osaka are about to establish employment bureaus, with some financial aid from the national government. The government also has offered to Tokyo a yearly subsidy of \$5000 for each establishment capable of lodging 100 vagrants, if it also attempts to improve their mode of life. The Tokyo City Asylum for the poor was organized in 1872 to shelter beggars and outcasts and to give them employment; and, as a first step, 140 poor men and women were housed in the mansion of the former Lord of Kaga, now the site of the Tokyo Imperial University. The asylum was supported at first by the prefecture; but, when the city regulations came into force, it passed, and ever since has remained, under the superintendence of the municipality. Its cleanliness is a pleasing feature. The Japanese are a clean people. The very poorest does not live upon the ground as do the Chinese and the Indians; he lives upon a platform, raised above the ground. No hardened soil for him, no chilly

pavement of brick or stone; a wooden floor, a piece of clean matting, a broom, and a bathtub, the poorest Japanese will always have.

Everywhere, in the universities, the schools, the hospitals, the military posts, and the houses, even in the streets, and the country I saw from the car window, I was impressed by the neatness of it all. There is no rubbish in Japan anywhere. The atmosphere is pure, the sky hangs clear above the beautiful islands, and crystal streams murmur down the green hillsides. Born and brought up under the influence of such surroundings cleanliness is instinctive.

Japan is in many respects the most remarkable country on earth, combining all the fascination of an ancient civilization with the interest of a vigorous new nation. The intense, fiery, patriotism, of which it has given remarkable proof of late, and its willingness to borrow, whenever other people's institutions seem better than its own, mark it off in the clearest and most emphatic way from every one of its geographic neighbors. The abandonment of the old order, at the cost of rank, fame, wealth, and even livelihood, for tens of thousands of its foremost citizens, and the upspringing of a whole nation are amazing, and give proof of a widespread, unselfish patriotism, unequalled in history. Aristocracy gave way in a day to a constitution and a parliament; feudalism and its mediaeval retainers to an European army and navy; public schools, both for boys and girls, were established throughout the land; and its post, its telegraphs, and its railways, equal those of the west; and all this was accomplished, not by the slow growth and gradual development of years, but almost at a wave of a magician's wand. For a whole people to lay aside what they were born to reverence and follow, because alien customs promise a greater good, is a spectacle unparalleled. The stigma has been removed from trade, the peasant walks free, secure in the possession of inviolate civil rights, and, more wonderful yet, women have come out of the guarded seclusion of the east, and enjoy a social existence and legal equality. May it be a bright future which awaits this charming people, who win so quickly the admiration, the sympathy, and the affection, of the stranger within their gates.